

Big box pharmacies offer lowest cash prices for generic drugs

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Compared with large chains, independent pharmacies and small chains had the highest cash prices for generic drugs and big-box pharmacies the lowest. Cash prices for brand-name drugs were similar across all types of retail pharmacies. Findings from a national cross-sectional study are published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Researchers from Brigham and Women's Hospital used data from GoodRx, an online tool for comparing drug prices, to compare cash prices for 10 generic and 6 [brand-name drugs](#) across different types of retail pharmacies within the same ZIP code. The researchers assessed cash prices for a 1-month supply of each drug purchased at big box, grocery-based, small chain, and independent pharmacies compared with a reference group of large chain pharmacies.

Across 16,325 [zip codes](#), 68,353 unique pharmacy stores contributed cash prices, showing substantial variation in drug prices by type of retail pharmacy. Independent pharmacies and small chains had the highest prices for [generic drugs](#) and big-box pharmacies had the lowest prices. Relative differences in cash prices for brand-name drugs were modest across types of retail pharmacies. The results did not account for price matching, coupons or other discount programs that may be available through individual pharmacies or drug manufactures.

The researchers say their study may be the largest study ever conducted on variation in prescription drug prices. Their findings suggest that online access to transparent, reliable drug [prices](#) that are specific to a patient's ZIP code may increase consumer choice and help mitigate the financial impact of certain [drug prices](#) and may be especially meaningful to the approximately 8 percent of Americans who do not have prescription drug coverage or those with high deductibles.

More information: Study:

<http://annals.org/aim/article/doi/10.7326/M18-1138>

Editorial: <http://annals.org/aim/article/doi/10.7326/M19-2899>

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